

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
Office of Fire and Aviation  
3833 South Development Avenue  
Boise, Idaho 83705

August 21, 2003

In Reply Refer To:  
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EMS Transmission 08/21/03  
Instruction Memorandum No. OF&A 2003-044  
Expires: 09/30/04

To: State and Center Directors, State FMOs and Servicing Personnel Officers  
From: Director, Office of Fire and Aviation  
Subject: Qualifications for Fire Dispatcher and Logistics Dispatcher Positions

**Program Area:** Fire Management

**Purpose:** Replaces IM OF&A 2003-031 and all other previous IMs regarding Fire Dispatcher qualifications and provides redefined policy and guidance regarding qualification and related requirements for Fire Dispatcher and Logistics Dispatcher positions. These qualification requirements are in addition to OPM qualification standards and the Interagency Fire Program Management minimum qualification standards and competencies. These added qualification requirements are intended to provide fire managers with flexibility in meeting dispatcher position needs while adhering to regulatory requirements and maintaining program effectiveness and integrity. The policy ensures that incumbents in these dispatcher positions have the proper knowledge, experience and training to effectively carry out the responsibilities of their respective positions. It also provides separate career ladders for the dispatching community.

**Policy/Action:** Dispatcher positions essentially fall into two separate categories with differing purposes and qualification requirements. These two categories are "Fire Dispatcher" and "Logistics Dispatcher" positions.

Fire Dispatcher Positions

The primary purpose of Fire Dispatcher positions is to serve as dispatchers in support of wildland fire suppression activities. Incumbents, relying on their prior on-the-line wildland firefighting experience anticipate dispatching needs based on the status of fire suppression activities and make recommendations regarding orders/anticipated orders. Fire Dispatcher positions should be classified in the GS-0455 Range Technician, GS-0462 Forestry Technician, or GS-0401 Natural Resource Specialist series. Fire Dispatcher is the organizational title for these positions. Fire Dispatcher position

descriptions must contain the mandatory requirement of prior on-the-line wildland firefighting experience. Position descriptions recommended for secondary firefighter retirement coverage approval must be submitted for coverage determination prior to recruitment. Respective servicing personnel offices should be contacted for information pertaining to an individual's eligibility for firefighter retirement in secondary positions.

In order to qualify for a Fire Dispatcher position, an individual must have prior on-the-line wildland firefighting experience. This requirement applies when hiring temporary not to exceed (NTE), career seasonal or permanent full time Fire Dispatchers. Prior on-the-line wildland firefighting experience is defined as experience on an organized crew where an individual gained experience on the fireline on a variety of initial attack, extended attack or project fires. For example, this is the type of experience that could be gained by serving in a temporary or seasonal fire position in a wildland fire management organization for one season (minimum of three months), in which there was steady wildland fire activity with opportunity to participated in several fire assignments.

The majority of currently established Dispatcher position descriptions fall under the Fire Dispatcher category, regardless of their organizational title, as a result of their documented requirement of prior on-the-line wildland firefighting experience.

#### Logistics Dispatcher Positions

The primary purpose of Logistics Dispatcher positions is to provide a range of coordination and administrative support functions, including completion and processing of resource order requests and coordinating with other dispatch organizations on mobilization and demobilization of resources. These duties provide indirect support to fire suppression efforts and can be effectively accomplished without prior on-the-line wildland firefighting experience. In the future, positions meeting the Logistics Dispatcher definition should be classified in the GS-2151 Dispatching series. Logistics Dispatcher is the organizational title for these positions.

In order to qualify for a Logistics Dispatcher position, an individual may have prior on-the-line wildland firefighting experience **OR** if they lack that specific experience, they must complete the Logistics Dispatcher Training/Development Program identified in Appendix 1 within three years of first entering the Logistics Dispatcher position. Failure to complete this training program within the three-year time limit will result in the employee being removed from their dispatcher position. This requirement applies when hiring temporary (NTE), career seasonal or permanent full time Logistics Dispatchers.

Currently existing positions that meet this definition and are classified in other series should be reclassified to the GS-2151 Dispatching series immediately. It is important to note that Logistics Dispatcher positions do not meet the requirements for secondary firefighter retirement coverage, and completion of the Logistics Dispatcher Training Program will NOT qualify an individual for the above-described Fire Dispatcher positions.

Established standard position descriptions (SPDs), either Bureau or Department, should be used where applicable and appropriate. An Interagency Classification Workgroup has developed several Department SPDs for Fire Dispatcher positions (GS-0455/0462-5 and 7) and Logistics Dispatcher positions (GS-2151-4, 5 and 7). These Department Dispatcher SPDs are currently in the approval process.

**Timeframe:** Immediately on issuance of this IM.

**Budget Impact:** None

**Contact:** Jim Knox, Chief, Human Resource Management (208) 387-5514; or Sandy Tripp, Program Analyst (208) 387-5627.

**Union:** All offices with a union are required to make notification of this action to the union representatives.

Signed by:  
Thomas Frey  
Acting Director  
Office of Fire and Aviation

Authenticated by:  
Pat Lewis  
Supervisory Mgmt. Asst.  
Office Services

1 Attachment  
1 - Appendix 1 (2pp)

Distribution:  
FA-101, MIB 3043  
Group Manager, Planning and Resources  
Group Manager, Support Services  
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## **LOGISTICS DISPATCHER TRAINING/DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**

Situation awareness and risk assessment are skills most effectively gained and developed through a combination of experience and training. Key employee development experience is best gained through first hand observation at fires, including initial attack, extended attack and large fires. Familiarity with fire operations is essential to developing an understanding of the support requirements for the dispatch organization. That familiarity can be developed through field visits led by an experienced fireline individual.

A task book, similar to the format sanctioned by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) should be used to outline and track employees' (trainees') progress. A combination of classroom and field orientation would be required for completion of the task book.

The task list must be included in the employee's (trainees') Individual Development Plan. The IDP will also be used to track the employee's (trainees') progress.

### Required Training Courses

I -100 Introduction to the Incident Command System

S -130 Firefighter Training

S -190 Introduction to Wildland Fire Behavior

### Fire Suppression Orientation

5 fire visits	Escorted by fireline personnel who would explain and interpret the fire operation. Appropriate fireline escorts would include personnel with a fire operations background. Trainees will be required to attend a post fire critique or closeout.
1 field training	Observe or participate in field firefighter training or refresher activities including fireline and hose lay construction, running attack with engines, helicopter operations (only if available locally), mop up and shelter deployment exercises.
1 preparedness review	Observe a unit fire season preparedness review.
1 prescribed fire	Observe a prescribed fire operation. Fire personnel should be assigned to the trainee to explain process and answer questions.
1 cache tour	Visit a fire cache to gain knowledge of commonly used fire equipment and supplies. Fire personnel should accompany the trainee to explain the process and answer questions.

1 air operations visit	As available locally, tour an air tanker base, smokejumper base and/or helicopter base with fire personnel to familiarize trainee with fire air operations.
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10 fire crew briefings	Participate in local fire crew briefings.
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Upon completion of the training and orientations listed above, the local Fire Management Officer/designee should sign the task book and the trainee should be certified as having completed the training program.